REMARKS

The present application was earlier subjected to a restriction requirement and claims 1 - 4 are presently elected for prosecution and pending in the application. Claim 1 has been amended as discussed below to further clarify the present invention.

Applicants appreciate Examiner's recognition of the true nature of the pending claims as applying to embodiments within a single computer system as opposed to within a network of computers.

The Official Action states that claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Minyard et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,487,606) in view of Bass et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,460,120). The Official Action states that "Minyard teaches a network system as shown in Figure 2." Figure 2 of Minyard shows what is clearly a network connecting a plurality of systems, the example of an Ethernet network being given for the network. The comments in the Official Action make it clear that the various computer systems within the network shown in Minyard are used to provide the elements of the claims of the present invention. For instance, the Action states "the claimed plurality of interface processors corresponds to the co-processors 62, 64, 66 and 68", co-processors 62, 64, 66 and 68 each being part of a different computer system. The Action also states that "the co-processors function as a front end interface between the network 30 and the CPUs..." This is in stark contrast to the present invention.

The Examiner, in utilizing Minyard as a reference, equates the co-processors (62, 64, 66, 68) of Minyard with the network processor of the present application. This analogy is totally inappropriate. The co-processors of Minyard are simply interfaces between the processors (12, 14, 16, 18) of Minyard and the network. These co-processors are "dedicated to handling the administrative tasks of the Totem system" (the Totem system being the token passing network

structure of Minyard). These co-processors in no way perform the same functions or have the same or even similar purpose as the network processor of the present application. The co-processors of Minyard are not "operatively interposed between said central processing unit and said peripheral devices and among said peripheral devices" as required of the network processor in pending claim 1, unless one interprets "peripheral devices" to include such devices of other computer systems connected via the network. Such an interpretation is in direct and stark contrast to the specific intent and meaning of the present application.

The Official Action then utilizes the Bass reference to provide a network processor, which is missing from the Minyard reference. The Official Action states that "it would have been obvious to use such a network processor in the network system of Minyard to perform the network operations (i.e. data handling, overhead tasks, etc.) otherwise performed by the CPU's." However, substituting the network processor of Bass into the Minyard reference still does not place the network processor "operatively interposed between said central processing unit and said peripheral devices and among said peripheral devices" as required by each pending claim of the present application. Such a substitution only results in a network of computer systems utilizing a network processor to help with the communications processing between the connected systems over the network - a known application which is nothing like the present application.

In responding the Applicants' earlier arguments, the Official Action states that the presently claimed computer system "can correspond to any one of the host processors 12, 14, 16 and 18, including CPU's and co-processors irrespective of network 30." The Official Action goes on to state that Bass teaches a network processor (interface device (IDC)(10) of figure 2) "connected between a system processor and peripheral devices (DRAM, SRAM,EEPROM, flash memory)." Actually, looking at Figure 2, the IDC of Bass is only shown connecting the processor to network switches such as "Main Sw." and "Backup Sw." This is because the Bass reference is disclosing and teaching the basic network processor form and function. Bass teaches

and contemplates the use of the network processor only as an aid to communication between computer systems in a network. Nowhere in Bass is it taught that a network processor can be utilized within a single computer system to aid in communicating between the computer system's components.

In reviewing the claims of the present application as amended, claim 1 has been amended to make it even clearer that the network processor must be utilized within the computer system and between components inside the single system. Read carefully and correctly, neither Minyard nor Bass teaches or contemplates such an application of a network processor. Finally, such an application of a network processor provides useful and non-obvious advantages over the prior art, as discussed at length in the present specification. Please see the discussion provided in the Applicants response to the earlier Official Action for more discussion of these distinctions.

Claims 2-4 each depend from claim 1 and thus inherit the patentable features of claim 1 discussed above. As discussed above, Applicants feel that the claims remaining in the present application, claims 1 - 4 as amended, stand in condition for allowance over the prior art of record and respectfully request early notification of the same. If the Examiner feels that questions of patentability remain and that an interview would be helpful in resolving the remaining issues, the favor of a phone call to the Applicants' attorney at the number given below is requested.

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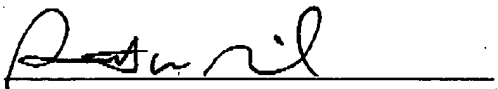
Respectfully submitted



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